

Congratulatory Remarks
Certificate of Commendation
Consul General George Hisaeda
July 27, 2011

Good evening everyone. Midori and I are delighted to welcome you to the Official Residence of the Consul General of Japan.

All of you know that you are here for a sushi dinner. It will be the 20th sushi dinner I have hosted. Before dinner begins, I usually give a lecture about sushi. But tonight, I'm doing something different. I'm holding a special ceremony to present a Certificate of Commendation to Ms. Megumi Kanda, a top Japanese trombonist. That's why we are in this room.

Let me explain the reasons for the commendation.

As Consul General, I'm always thinking about the best ways to bring Japanese culture to Chicago and the Midwest. We present traditional Japanese arts such as Kabuki, Kyogen, and Ukiyo-e. And we sponsor events that feature manga and anime as well as innovative technology and contemporary Japanese design.

However, I believe that it is just as important to highlight Japanese individuals, who excel abroad in traditionally Western fields such as baseball and classical music.

The Japanese community is proud of star athletes like Fukudome and Ichiro, and it is proud of internationally acclaimed conductors and musicians such as Seiji Ozawa and Midori Gotoh. Today, I am truly delighted to tell you about another stellar performer, Megumi Kanda.

I have long known of Megumi. Since her high school days, her extraordinary talent has been celebrated far and wide. She is a native of Tokyo, and studied at Toho High School of Music. While there, Megumi won the Grand Prize in the National Competition for Solo Trombone and the best soloist prize when she graduated. She moved to the U.S. in 1994, and received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music. She was as a member of the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and Principal Trombonist of the Albany Symphony Orchestra.

Today, Megumi is Principal Trombone of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. She is the first female to hold such a position in a major American orchestra.

This is not a surprise. When I've talked with the leading trombone and brass instrument players in this area, their praise for her is unanimous. They all say that Megumi's beautiful tone is unmatched, that her performances go beyond the trombone to achieve art itself, and that she is a true musician. I couldn't agree more.

Last January, Megumi performed the world premier of the Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra with the Milwaukee Symphony. The concerto is beautiful but technically very difficult. Megumi triumphed conveying the emotion of the piece with flawless technique. The moment the final note was played, the audience jumped to its feet and gave her a long standing ovation.

Her performance also received worldwide attention. The April issue of the quarterly *International Trombone Association Journal* featured Megumi on its cover. The article highlighted her career and her world premier performance. It's such a rare honor. Only four trombonists are on the cover each year.

I cannot say enough about Megumi. Even though she is much in demand, she has always cooperated closely with the Consulate. She has performed at concerts and other cultural events that I have organized.

In so many ways, Megumi is bringing people in the Midwest and the United States closer to Japan, and she is a superb role model for Japanese nationals in the United States.

For all that she has achieved, I applaud and thank Megumi. In a moment, I will present a special Certificate of Commendation to Megumi for her distinguished service in deepening our understanding and friendship.

I cannot forget to mention a couple of things. Megumi is my personal trombone teacher. And I've made tremendous progress during the last two and a half years. I thank her deeply.

Also, this event was not meant to be a concert. I know that all of you wish to hear her play. But I hesitated because it was too much to ask a professional trombonist like Megumi to perform with just a few days notice.

Fortunately, Ms. Miyo Nakamura, who has accompanied Megumi on the piano, is also here. So, instead of asking them to present a long piece, I suggested that they play a short Japanese folk song, which has moved audiences in the past. I'm most grateful that Megumi and Miyo kindly agreed. It will be a special treat for all of us.

I'm delighted that I can hold this ceremony and dinner today. A week and a half ago, I received a transfer order from the Foreign Ministry, and I will return to Tokyo late next month.

My wife, Midori, and I have had a wonderful time in Chicago and the Midwest. Everyone has been so kind and cooperative. We will always treasure our many friends here.

My new assignment has not been determined yet. I'll let you know as soon as I know. No matter where Midori and I will be, whether in Japan or overseas, the Midwest and all of you will be in our hearts.

Well, let's move on to the ceremony.

Megumi, will you please step forward?

Ms. Kanda, it is my great honor to present to you a Certificate of Commendation. It is in Japanese. The English translation reads:

The Consul General of Japan extends his deepest regards to Ms. Megumi Kanda in recognition of her distinguished service in contributing to the deepening of

mutual understanding and friendship between Japan and the United States of America.

Dated July 27, 2011

George Hisaeda, Consul General of Japan at Chicago

[Presentation]

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in applauding our distinguished honoree, Ms. Megumi Kanda.

Congratulations, Megumi, from all of us.

Thank you very much.